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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 23, 2007

The Honorable Jim Nicholson  
Secretary  
Department of Veteran Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Nicholson:

As the Department of Veteran Affairs formulates final decisions for new Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) this year, I ask that you support Elkhart County's request for a CBOC. I appreciate your continuing concern for our nation's veterans and the difficult task of locating these new CBOCs.


As you know, the Elkhart County, Indiana proposal has demonstrated a valid need for a CBOC by receiving 12 out of the 14 possible criteria points for the Policy Board's approval. Veterans in Northern Indiana have been unnecessarily burdened when trying to access needed medical care. Often, Hoosier veterans are required to drive through two or three counties, which takes much longer than the 30-minute time standard required by the CARES Commission, to receive the health care they need. A new CBOC in this area would go a long way in providing better access and quality to those in need.

Currently, the South Bend, Indiana CBOC is carrying the burden of the excess demand for health services from veterans in Northern Indiana. A CBOC in Elkhart County would help alleviate many of the strains placed on the South Bend CBOC by the ever increasing veteran population in Northern Indiana. In addition, the veteran population will continuously be increasing as Northeast Indiana has one of the highest military recruitment rates in the nation.

I first wrote to Secretary Principi in May 2004 regarding a new CBOC in Indiana and I have followed up numerous times with letters and meetings with both Secretary Principi and yourself expressing my continued support for an Elkhart County CBOC. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your service to the nation. Please keep us updated on the status of the project and let me know how I can be of assistance in ensuring veterans in Northern Indiana have timely access to high quality health care.

Sincerely,

*Thank for  
your help.*

  
Mark Souder  
Member of Congress

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